

the first ski school at Storm Mountain. Every step of the way opened a new opportunity for Skeeter and her family that allowed them to have a dramatic impact on the Yampa Valley that will last forever. She fell in love with and, in 1969, married Doak Walker, the 1948 Heisman Trophy winner. Together, Doak and Skeeter helped to shape Steamboat and the skiing community. Doak passed away in 1998 following a skiing injury several months earlier.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, Skeeter was a person who lived an accomplished life. Although friends and family are profoundly saddened by her passing on Friday, July 20, each can take solace in the wonderful life that she led. At the age of 67, Skeeter was an outstanding member of the community and a heroic role model for others. I know I speak for everyone who knew Skeeter well when I say she will be greatly missed.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an error I made earlier today in voting for the previous question motion on the Treasury, Postal Appropriations bill. As is customary on such procedural motions I voted "aye." Had I been aware of the implications of the vote, I would have voted "no."

I have been and continue to be an opponent of Congressional pay raises. Fiscal discipline must start with our elected officials. My constituents don't get a cost of living increase every year and neither should we. Had I known the previous question vote would be construed as having anything to do with a congressional COLA, I would have opposed it.

Not only do I oppose the pay raise itself, but I strongly oppose the manner in which this issue is handled. We ought to have a clear "yes" or "no" vote on the pay raise and let the chips fall where they may. When given the opportunity to vote on the pay raise directly, I have always voted "no." If others feel differently, let them cast their vote in the light of day and explain it to their constituents. To disguise an issue as important as a congressional pay raise inside a procedural motion is less than honest. Such gimmicks further erode this institution's credibility and member integrity.

It is my responsibility to know all the implications of the motions and bills that I vote on. My constituents deserve my attention on each and every vote. One the issue of a congressional pay raise, the American people deserve better from all of us.

#### VETERANS HAVING HEALTH-CARE

#### HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to ensure that all veterans, regardless of where they live, have equitable access to the best health care at VA

medical centers across America, and especially in the Northeast.

Along with Congresswoman KELLY and Congressmen GRUCCI, HINCHEY and GILMAN, we are introducing two bills to improve the way the VA allocates funding for veterans medical care across the nation.

In 1997, Congress passed legislation that authorized the VA to develop a new formula for allocating veterans medical care dollars across the country. At the time, veterans were moving from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West, and the VA's formula then did not address how to allocate funding with this shift.

Unfortunately, the new formula developed by the VA still failed to address the changing demographics of the veterans population. The so-called Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation formula (VERA) did begin to provide additional medical care dollars to areas with growing veterans populations, but unfortunately, the VA did so by slashing funding to states with veterans populations that remained stable, like my own state of New Jersey and others in the Northeast.

I know firsthand about the law of unintended consequences. VERA has had the terrible effect of restricting access of veterans to medical care in my part of the country because my district in New Jersey is part of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 3. This VISN has borne the brunt of VERA's funding shift. According to the VA's own figures, funding for VISN 3 has been reduced by 6 percent, or \$64 million, at a time when other VISNs saw their allocations increase by as much as 47 percent or even 53 percent!

I continue to ask the VA how this practice is equitable and why medical care in the Northeast should be reduced.

New Jersey has the second oldest veterans population in the nation, behind Florida. Our state has the fourth highest number of complex care patients treated at VA's hospitals. Yet New Jersey's older, sicker veterans are routinely left waiting months for visits to primary care physicians and specialists or denied care at New Jersey's two VA nursing homes.

Something is fundamentally wrong with the VERA allocation formula if it continues to decrease funding for areas where veterans have the greatest medical needs. All veterans, regardless of where they live, have earned and deserve access to the same quality of medical care—care that is too often denied under the current formula based.

That is why I rise today with nearly 30 of my colleagues to introduce these two bills.

The first bill, the Veterans Equal Treatment Act, would repeal the VERA formula and direct the VA to devise a truly equitable allocation formula based on need.

The second bill, the Equitable Care for All Veterans Act, would require the VA to take steps to account for regional differentials—the differences in the costs of providing care in some areas of the country due to the high cost of living, long travel distances, and like—in determining the national means test threshold. This threshold currently stands at \$24,000 for veterans across the country, regardless of where they live.

We know that the costs of such basic necessities as housing and utilities differ across the country. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the ten least affordable States include New Jersey, New York,

Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont and Rhode Island. These States are parts of VISNs 1, 2 and 3—all three VISNs fare the worst under the present VERA allocation formula.

Mr. Speaker, VERA should be adjusted to reflect factors such as the high cost of housing in the means test. It is the least we can do to ensure that all veterans who need and deserve care are provided with access to VA medical centers.

I strongly encourage the Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee to hold hearings on these issues, and to move forward with changes to the VERA allocation formula as outlined in these two bills.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, earlier today on the vote to consider the previous question on this bill I intended to vote "no" but inadvertently voted "aye".

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 255 on H.J. Res. 50, I mistakenly recorded my vote as "no" when I should have voted "aye".

#### TRIBUTE TO THE ORIGINAL 29 NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

#### HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the original 29 Navajo Code Talkers, who courageously served this country during WWII. The original 29 Navajo code talkers developed a Navajo language-based code to transmit information while in the Pacific theatre. Their efforts were invaluable to this nation and helped bring the war in the Pacific to a close, impacting all Americans. Today these men or their surviving family members are receiving Congressional gold medals of honor as a symbol of our Nation's appreciation for their valor.

In early 1942 the Marines started to recruit Navajo men to serve as code talkers in the Pacific. The Marines were searching for a code, which the Japanese would be unable to break. Since the Navajo language is incredibly complex and consists of complicated syntax and tonal qualities, plus different dialects it was an ideal code. The original 29 Navajo Code Talkers developed a code dictionary, which had to be memorized. This code consisted of English translations of Navajo phrases. The Japanese were never able to break the complicated code. The Navajo Code